

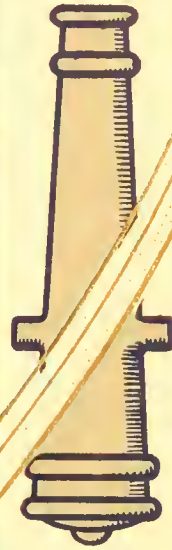
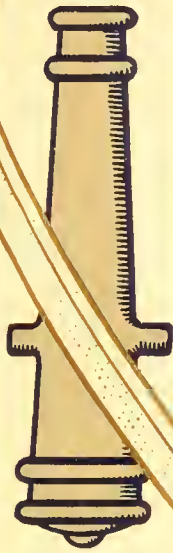
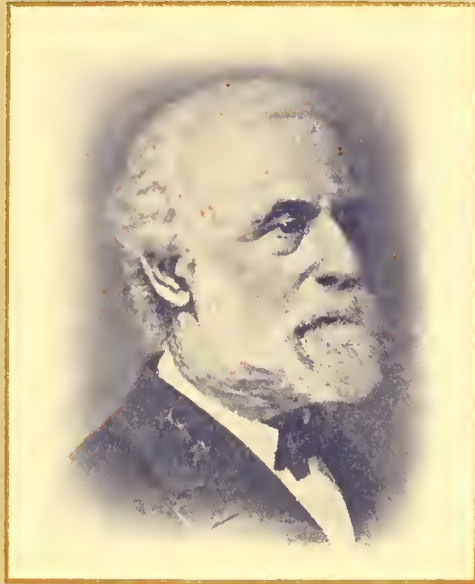


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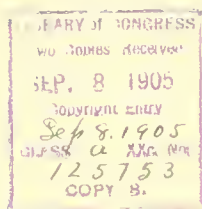
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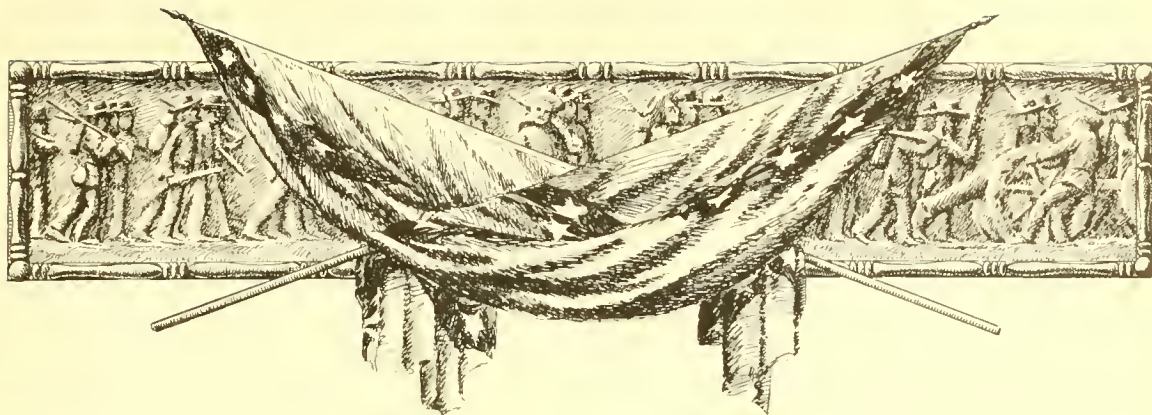
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THE STORY *of* ROBERT E. LEE

BOY AND YOUNG MAN

STRATFORD, the ancient manor-house of the Lee family, is yet standing in the historic county of Westmoreland, Virginia, near the banks of the Potomac, and only separated by a few miles from the birthplace of the great "Father of his Country." It was in one of the rooms of this stately mansion that two signers of the immortal Declaration of Independence were born, Richard Henry and Francis Lightfoot Lee, and here, also, on the nineteenth of January, 1807, in the same chamber, Robert Edward Lee, the future commander of the heroic Army of Northern Virginia, first saw the light of day.

The little new comer was the fourth son of General Henry Lee, the dashing "Light-horse Harry" of the Revolution, and, as after events proved, was an heir to the military genius of his celebrated father united to the gentle and lovable nature of a sweet and refined mother. This noble woman, who early inspired the young child with those ideas which are the basis of a lofty character, was a daughter of the Carters of Shirley, one of the oldest and most respected families of Virginia.

Robert was about four years old when General Lee removed to Alexandria, near Washington, for the especial purpose of giving to his children the advantage of an education in the fine schools for which the town was noted. It was

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only two years later when the health of the father began to fail, and he regretfully left his family and voyaged to the West Indies in the hope of staying the progress of a fatal disease. General Lee remained in the tropics for several years, but at last, despairing of recovery, turned his face toward home. It was destined that he should never reach Virginia. On the return voyage he was taken seriously ill and was landed at Cumberland Island, Georgia, where he died and is buried.

This sad event was a hard blow to the youngest son, now eleven years old, who had dearly loved his father and admired him as a hero. Robert was the only brother then permanently at home, and he manfully accepted responsibilities and duties far beyond his years. He devoted himself to his mother, who had now become a patient invalid, and relieved her as much as he could from all domestic cares. A paragraph from a letter of the sick father, written in the somewhat stilted language of the time, reveals a glimpse of the sterling character which the dying man had recognized as developing in the son: "Robert, who is always good, will be enjoined in his happy frame of mind by his ever watchful and affectionate mother."

The schooling of the boy was obtained in old Alexandria Academy, and his first teacher was a Mr. Leary, an amiable and accomplished gentleman, who grounded him well in the essentials of a good education. After the Civil War, a meeting took place between the teacher and his famous pupil and the latter was not ashamed to display a genuine depth of feeling for his aged instructor.

It is probable that the career of his next oldest brother, Sydney Smith Lee, who had entered the service of the United States Navy, as well as his own natural bent toward the military, strongly influenced the boy's choice of a vocation in life, for it was soon decided that Robert should go in for the army. With that end in view he was sent to Mr. Benjamin Hallowell's school in Alexandria, known to irreverent scholars as "Brimstone Castle," from its peculiar color, and in 1825, when eighteen years old, the name of Robert E. Lee was on the list of appointees to the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he successfully passed all examinations and was enrolled as a cadet.

It is recorded that Cadet Lee paid strict attention to the duty required in this superb military institution. The study of tactics and strategy was particularly agreeable to him, and his excellent habits and efficiency soon made

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Old Battery at West Point

him a cadet officer in his class. During the last year in the Academy he attained the post of honor, the adjutancy of the corps. There appears to be no stories of Cadet Lee "running the guard" or indulging in any of the forbidden amusements not unknown to many a stern alumnus of West Point. In 1829, Robert E. Lee graduated second in a class of forty-six, and was immediately commissioned and became Lieutenant Lee of the Engineer Corps of the United States Army. It is interesting to recall that twenty years later, his eldest son, George Washington Custis Lee, who was also cadet adjutant, graduated first in his class and was assigned to the Engineer Corps. This famous Corps is composed of cadets who have gained the highest honors in the Academy, and it has contained, from time to time, a remarkable number of distinguished men and able soldiers.

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Lieutenant Lee, we are told, was "splendid-looking, as full of life, fun, and particularly of teasing, as any of us." He was straight, and carried erect a finely-shaped head upon a pair of broad shoulders. He had been an occasional visitor at Arlington, the beautiful home of George Washington Parke Custis, the adopted son of George Washington, and while very young, had been attracted by the beauty and good sense of Mary Custis, a talented young woman, who was fitted by birth, education and family tradition to be his companion for life. At first Mr. Custis faintly opposed the prospect of a military son-in-law, but Lieutenant Lee was thoroughly in earnest and the great granddaughter of Martha Washington became the promised bride of the young soldier.



Grand Old Arlington House

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The marriage took place at grand old Arlington House on the thirtieth of June, 1831. It is doubtful if a happier or more brilliant assemblage ever gathered within those historic walls. An amusing episode added to the gayety of the occasion. The officiating clergyman was drenched by a brief but heavy shower which overtook him while coming to Arlington, and was obliged to borrow dry garments of Mr. Custis. The difference in the size of the two men was very noticeable, and but for the surplice which covered the good man's misfortune during the ceremony, it would have been hard for the well-bred company to conceal its smiles.

Lieutenant Lee was assigned to work on the defenses at Hampton Roads for nearly four years, and his splendid performance of this duty soon obtained him an appointment as assistant to the chief engineer at Washington. This was an agreeable change as it brought him near his wife, and the figure of the tall officer riding in from Arlington every morning to the department, and back again in the evening, became a familiar one. It was probably a most happy period of his life. A story is told of one fine afternoon when he dared another lieutenant to mount behind him and ride to Arlington—a challenge which was promptly accepted, to the horror of a dignified Cabinet Secretary, who met the laughing young men as they paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue, bowing to everyone they knew.

Seven years after leaving West Point he became Captain Lee, and was ordered to St. Louis to overcome a tendency of the Mississippi to abandon the Missouri shore and flow entirely through the State of Illinois. It was a herculean task, and kept him away from his home in Virginia for many years, but was finally accomplished in spite of much bitter and ignorant opposition, for hundreds of the citizens could not comprehend the engineering work—the driving of piles and the building of coffer-dams at selected points—which caused sediment to be deposited in the new angles and gradually forced the reluctant river back to its original channels.

At the completion of this enduring work Captain Lee was ordered to New York City to perfect the system of harbor defence, and stationed at Fort Hamilton. Here for a time his family, now including Mrs. Lee, a little daughter, Mary, and two sturdy boys, formed a charming portion of the garrison community—a peaceful picture soon disturbed by rumors of war.



IN WAR AND PEACE

THE Republic of Texas, which had revolted from Mexico in 1836, was admitted to the American Union in 1845. As the Mexicans had never formally acknowledged the independence of the Texans, the annexation caused much ill-feeling. The western boundary of the new State was yet unsettled. Both the United States and Mexico sent armies to enforce their authority in

the disputed territory, and, as might have been expected, the proximity of the hostile bodies finally resulted in a collision in which blood was shed and the Mexican War precipitated. General Zachary Taylor (Old Rough and Ready) in command of the American army, immediately took the offensive, defeated a superior force of the enemy in two pitched battles, crossed the Rio Grande and invaded Mexico.

The war, now an accomplished fact, was not popular in all sections of the country, but Captain Lee, being an army officer, did not stop to inquire into the right or wrong of a struggle with a foreign power. He took the field at once with General Wool, operating in northern Mexico,

General Zachary Taylor

but was soon drafted by General Winfield Scott, commanding an army which laid siege to the city of Vera Cruz, and attached to his staff.

The siege of this Mexican seaport was conducted with great vigor. The placing of batteries and many other important details were left in charge of

Captain Lee, and much of the credit for the speedy surrender of Vera Cruz, which took place after a week's bombardment, was ascribed to his good judgment.

Having now a secure base of operations, General Scott was ready to advance on the city of Mexico. The forward movement began early in April. Santa Anna, the Mexican commander, threw a strong force across the road at Cerro Gordo, but was utterly defeated and his army put to headlong flight. Santa Anna himself narrowly escaped capture and lost a cork leg in the chase. In an official report of the battle General Scott wrote: "I am obliged to make special mention of Captain R. E. Lee, Engineer. This officer was again indefatigable during these operations in reconnaissances as daring as laborious, and of the utmost value."

The Americans had proven their fighting ability so well that no further serious opposition was encountered until the Valley of Mexico was reached. Here the Mexican forces gathered to defend their Capital, while Scott's army moved down the mountain side to within ten miles of the city. At this point the American troops became separated by the Pedregal, a vast, desolate expanse of volcanic rocks and scoria, full of dangerous fissures, only passable on foot and then by the most painful exertions. It was necessary that General Scott on one side of the barrier should communicate with the troops on the other side. Night came on and with it a torrent of cold, drenching rain. Seven officers attempted the task only to return exhausted, but Captain Lee, who was with the advanced force, traversed the Pedregal alone, informed his commander of the positions of the troops in front, and requested that a diversion be made in the morning against the enemy's center. General Scott afterward characterized this service as "the greatest feat of physical and moral courage performed by any individual, to my knowledge, pending the campaign."

On the following morning, August 20, 1847, the advance was made, as asked for, and Contreras fell in seventeen minutes. The American forces won five distinct actions during the day, and at nightfall the bulk of the Mexican army was glad to gain the shelter of the city walls. A few weeks later with the fall of Molino del Rey and Chapultepec, the strongest defenses of the Capital, the American troops entered Mexico and raised the Stars and Stripes over the National Palace.



Chapultepec

The Mexican campaign was only six months long but it clearly demonstrated the wonderful ability of Robert E. Lee as a soldier. He was successively brevetted major, lieutenant-colonel and colonel for gallant conduct. It is doubtful, however, if all these honors satisfied him so much as to be home again at Arlington with

his children, "who," as he writes, "seem to devote themselves to staring at the white hairs in my head and the furrows in my face."

Among the young captains and lieutenants who were in the victorious American army and more or less known to Captain Lee may be named Ulysses S. Grant, George G. Meade, George B. McClellan, Winfield S. Hancock, Joseph Hooker, Ambrose E. Burnside, Irving McDowell, John Sedgwick, and also Albert Sidney and Joseph E. Johnston, Ambrose P. Hill, James Longstreet, Jubal Early, Richard S. Ewell, Braxton Bragg, Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson and Peter G. T. Beauregard. They were all young men, fighting side by side under one flag, little dreaming that in less than fifteen years they would draw their swords in hostile armies.

Captain Lee went back cheerfully to his engineering work, but in 1852 received the appointment as superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point, from which he had graduated only twenty-three years before. The discipline of the institution was much improved while he administered its affairs, and the school attained a higher degree of efficiency than had been the rule. His son tells a story of this period which is typical of the gentle, kindly soul of Robert E. Lee.

"It was against the rules that the cadets should go beyond certain limits without permission. Of course they did go sometimes, and when caught were given quite a number of 'demerits.' My father was riding out one afternoon with me, and, while rounding a turn in the mountain road with a deep woody

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“They were all young men fighting side by side under one flag”

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ravine on one side, we came suddenly upon three cadets far beyond the limits. They immediately leaped over a low wall on the side of the road and disappeared from our view. We rode on for a minute in silence; then my father said: 'Did you know those young men? But no; if you did, don't say so. I wish boys would do what is right, it would be so much easier for all parties.' "

In 1855 Captain Lee was promoted to be lieutenant-colonel of the Second Cavalry, a new regiment raised for service in the Southwest, and ceased to be superintendent of the Academy. The theatre of the operations of this regiment, which was commanded by Colonel Albert Sidney Johnston, was in the region embraced by the the Rio Grande on the south and the Arkansas River on the north, extending from the western boundary of the Indian Territory to the eastern line of New Mexico. This immense country was then almost entirely the home of wild animals and savage Indians, and it was the duty of the



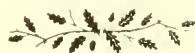
Engine House, Harper's Ferry — Seized by "John Brown Raiders"

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Second Cavalry to stop the depredations of the latter upon such settlements as were exposed to their attacks.

For several years the regiment was employed in this dangerous work. Colonel Lee assumed full command himself in 1857 and accomplished much useful service in repressing the activity of the Indians. He was in Virginia in the fall of 1859 just in time to be summoned by the Secretary of War to capture the "John Brown Raiders" who had seized the government arsenal at Harper's Ferry. All the raiders were killed, wounded or captured. The Virginians were wild with excitement, but Colonel Lee protected the prisoners from mob violence, turned them over to the civil authorities as directed from Washington, and rode home to Arlington.

Shortly afterward, he returned to his post in the West. Here he remained, profoundly agitated by the growing danger of a civil war, until ordered to report at Washington in March, 1861.



THE GREAT COMMANDER

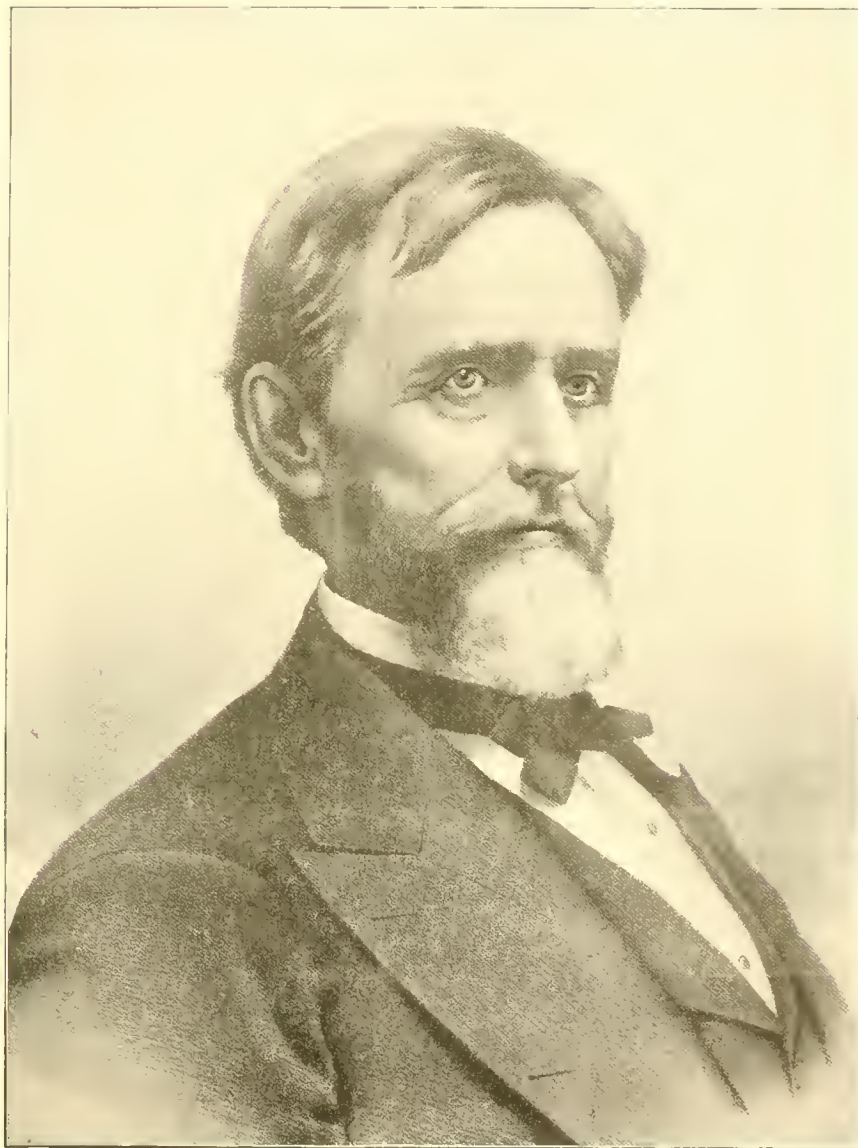
SINCE the Mexican War, the slavery question had come more to the front, year by year, until it held first place in the thoughts of all Americans, North and South. Its discussion was not always attended by reason or good judgment, and as time went on the people of both sections began to look upon each other as enemies. The rapid spread of this feeling caused many earnest men who honestly differed in their solution of the problem to think alike so far as alarm for the safety of the Union was concerned.

Colonel Lee had outlined his views on the subject of human slavery in a letter from Texas in 1856 in which he wrote: "There are few, I believe, in this enlightened age who will not acknowledge that slavery as an institution is a moral and political evil. I think it is a greater evil to the white than to the colored race. While my feelings are strongly enlisted in behalf of the latter, my sympathies are more deeply engaged for the former. Emancipation will sooner result from the mild and melting influences of Christianity than from the storm and tempest of fiery controversy."

There were plenty of Americans who shared these ideas, but the trend of events in the North firmly convinced the South that what the bulk of the southern people considered their constitutional rights were not safe. As the Presidential election of 1860 drew nigh, it was clear that a split in the Union was at hand, and the returns were anxiously awaited by the whole people.

The election of President Abraham Lincoln was the signal for action. Led by South Carolina, the States of Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas passed ordinances declaring themselves independent of the United States Government, and on February 4, 1861, delegates from these seven "Cotton States" met at Montgomery, Alabama, and organized the Confederate States of America. They elected Jefferson Davis and Alexander H. Stephens, President and Vice-President, adopted a constitution and a flag and took steps to form an army and navy.

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Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy

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The first shell which burst over Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, decided the question of peace or war between the two governments. President Lincoln's call for troops was followed by the secession of Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and on the 17th of April, by Virginia. All these States united with the new Confederacy.

Hundreds of brave men who had served honorably in the army or navy of the United States were now obliged to determine the path of duty—whether it lie with the old flag and their old associates or with their homes, their relatives and friends. To an elevated and conscientious character like that of Robert E. Lee it was a terrible ordeal. What it cost him in mental anguish may be gleaned from letters written at this period. General Scott, who was a Virginian, pleaded with him to remain in the service of the United States, but the action of the Old Dominion appears to have settled the matter. Although offered the command of the Northern army, Colonel Lee declared: "If I owned four millions of slaves, I would cheerfully sacrifice them to the preservation of the Union, but to lift my hand against my own State and people is impossible." On the 20th of April he forwarded his resignation to the Secretary of War, and on the 23d accepted an appointment as commander-in-chief of the military forces of Virginia with the rank of Major-General.

The call of duty as it appeared to Robert E. Lee was stronger than any other consideration. He sacrificed his private fortune without a murmur when his family left Arlington, which became the headquarters of the Federal advance into Virginia during the month following his resignation. Beautiful Arlington was endeared to him by its historic associations and by many years of happy married life. For these reasons only, the loss of it wrung his heart.

At the beginning of hostilities neither government was prepared for the vigorous prosecution of a war, but General Lee had lived too many years in the North and knew the people of that section too well to share the common belief that the struggle would be a short one. He immediately bent all his energies to the work of preparation and organization. There was no lack of men at this time, the difficulty was to arm them. He therefore added to his labors the promotion of interest in the manufacture of small arms, cannon and ammunition in the South. By the last of May, 1861, he had organized, equipped and put in the field over thirty thousand men.

The seat of the Confederate Government was soon removed to Richmond, and General Lee was transferred to its service. A few weeks later the quality

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of the troops which he had sent to the front was proven on the field of Bull Run. Neither side in that historic battle was composed of well-trained soldiers, but from them developed two of the grandest bodies of fighting men that the world has ever seen — the gallant Army of Northern Virginia and the



At Bull Run

splendid Army of the Potomac — destined to meet upon a hundred fields.

McDowell's defeat relieved Richmond from the danger of an immediate attack, and the attention of the Southern leaders turned to the threatening condition of affairs in northwestern Virginia. The people of that mountainous region had been reluctant to leave the Union, and a Confederate army operating in the district with the object of securing its allegiance to the Southern cause had been scattered by a strong force of Federals. Union victories were rare in the first months of the war, and the commander of the successful army, General George B. McClellan, became famous throughout the North. As the work of organizing and assigning troops had become less important, General Lee was appointed to the command of the Confederate army in northwestern Virginia. He found himself opposed by an able officer, General William S. Rosecrans, who had succeeded McClellan.

It must be admitted that this campaign among the mountains, which lasted three months, was marked by no Confederate successes of value, in fact, by no large engagements whatever. Bad weather and a lack of harmony in the Southern army upset the best plans of the patient leader. At the approach of winter, the authorities at Richmond suspended operations in that quarter, and the northwestern part of Virginia was afterward cut off and admitted to the Union as West Virginia in 1863.

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The public criticism of General Lee on his return from this barren campaign was bitter and unjust. He was called "incapable," and accused of being too much the engineer, "preferring rather to dig entrenchments than to fight." The great soul of the man knew that the blame for his ill-success belonged to others, but he chose to remain silent.

Soon after, it became evident to the Confederate Department of War that the long coast line of the southernmost Atlantic States was practically defenceless and lay exposed to the energetic Federal fleets and armies. It was an alarming condition, as the seaports were already the great feeders through which the young Confederacy received supplies of every description from abroad, many of which were almost essential to sustain the Southern cause at that time. The work demanded an able engineer. General Lee, above all others, was the man



The Confederate Capitol at Richmond

for the duty, but it was with some misgivings that he received the orders, for the storm of criticism had not entirely ceased. His instructions were to put the coasts of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida in defensive condition.

This appalling task engaged General Lee's closest attention for over four months. He was constantly on the move from one point to another along the line of operations, and public confidence in the three States was restored by the powerful works that rose as if by magic. At Charlestown and Savannah, the fortifications were placed with masterly skill—how well will be realized when it is remembered that both cities defied all attempts to capture them until near the close of the war.

With the coming of spring, the immense army which McClellan had gathered about Washington began to prepare to move against the Confederate Capital. At the first indication of this forward movement, President Davis, who had never lost faith in General Lee, recalled him from South Carolina and gave him command of the armies of the Confederacy. This office carried with it the duty of conducting the military operations of the Southern forces under the direction of Mr. Davis.

Indeed, there was reason for anxiety, for things had begun badly for the new government during the first few months of 1862. In the West, Forts Henry and Donelson had fallen before the combined Union fleet and army under General Ulysses S. Grant, and Nashville had capitulated. These reverses and the threatened movement against Richmond thoroughly aroused the South. Two of General Lee's sons, Custis and William Fitzhugh, had joined the army at the outbreak of the war. It was now found impossible to restrain the ardor of Robert, the youngest boy. With his father's permission, he tossed aside his school books and enlisted in a company of artillery.

Early in April, McClellan transported the Army of the Potomac to the peninsula between the York and the James rivers, took Yorktown, the scene of Washington's capture of Cornwallis, and cautiously followed the Confederate forces as they fell back toward Richmond. The retreating army was commanded by General Joseph E. Johnston. At Fair Oaks and Seven Pines, a few miles from the city, it turned and fought desperately to check the Federal advance. McClellan was brought to a pause, but the heroic Johnston, of whom Scott said in the Mexican War, "He is a great soldier, but unfortunate enough to get shot in every engagement," was carried from the field severely wounded.

Richmond was dismayed at the news of this disaster. Her streets shook with the grumble of hostile cannon, and even the flash of the Northern musketry fire could be seen from the house-tops. The thoughts of all centred on the man who had saved the ports of the Confederacy as the one to deliver the Capital. In the early morning hours of June 1, 1862, the day after the battle, Mr. Davis drew up the order. At two o'clock in the afternoon General Lee rode to the front and took command, for the first time, of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The story of the Seven-Days'-Fight which followed, of how Lee, re-enforced by Jackson, struck McClellan's right flank and, day after day, pounded back the Federal line until it stood fast at Malvern Hill, filled the world with admiration for the pluck and endurance of the American soldier, and made Robert E. Lee the idol of the South.

At this time, however, General Lee could ill afford to rest upon this success. Leaving enough men to protect Richmond, he drove General Pope from Manassas, forced McClellan's army to be brought back to the defence of Washington, and invaded Maryland. The bloody field of Sharpsburg (Antietam) caused the Confederate army to recross the Potomac and take up a strong position at Fredericksburg on the southern side of the Rappahannock. Here, in December, Burnside vainly attempted to take the famous Marye's Heights.

The men of the Army of Northern Virginia had now learned to love and respect their gray-haired leader. "Here comes Mars' Robert" and the thrilling Confederate yell always greeted his appearance among them. That wonderful soldier, "Stonewall" Jackson, shared in these sincere outbursts of affection. It is notable that all the glory and praise which came to General Lee from this successful campaign did not alter his character by a hair's-breadth. Throughout the whole war, in victory or defeat, he remained the same unassuming, unselfish man—a kind and thoughtful father. From the winter camp at Fredericksburg he writes to his daughter in Richmond: "My precious Little Agnes: I have not heard of you for a long time. I wish you were with me, for, always solitary, I am sometimes weary, and long for the reunion of my family once again." In these sentences is revealed the heart of Robert E. Lee.

An incident typical of the peculiar conditions which existed in the Southern army occurred at Manassas. For the purpose of watching the Federal

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“That wonderful soldier, ‘Stonewall’ Jackson”

movements, General Lee had galloped to an eminence where some men were serving a gun. During a lull in the firing, one of his staff said: "General, here is someone who wants to see you." General Lee turned and finding only an artilleryman, black with powder-sweat, said kindly, "Well, my man, what can I do for you?" The soldier replied: "Why, General, don't you know me?" It was his own son, "Rob," fighting as a private of artillery. The father was overjoyed to find him safe and well, but the circumstance does not appear to have been considered either remarkable or unusual.

For several months the two great armies watched each other from the opposite banks of the Rappahannock. Toward the last of April, General Hooker led the Army of the Potomac across the river, keeping to the north of the strong defenses at Fredericksburg. The battle which ensued at Chancellorsville ranks among the most terrible of the war. Hooker was driven back, but the Confederate cause suffered beyond repair in the loss of "Stonewall" Jackson, who fell mortally wounded by a volley from his own men. The news of his death was received by General Lee with deep emotion, and he declared truly that he had lost his right arm as a commander.

It was now determined that the war should be carried into the Union States, for it was believed that a decisive success on Northern soil would end the struggle in favor of the Confederacy. The Southern army took up its march through Maryland and invaded Pennsylvania in the highest spirits. But General Lee's good fortune did not follow him across the Potomac. The two armies again clashed in a desperate conflict near the little farming community of Gettysburg. For two long days under the hot summer sun the men of the South pushed back the stubborn blue lines, but on July 3d, Pickett's gallant charge against the Union center was as gallantly repulsed, and the Confederate hopes of a great victory were disappointed. General Lee did not hesitate to take the blame for this defeat upon his own shoulders, and skilfully withdrew his army to the southern bank of the Rapidan. Its old antagonist slowly followed.

A touching episode at Gettysburg which illustrates the generous nature of the famous Southern leader is told by a Union veteran who lay upon the field on the third day suffering from a fearful wound. Faint from loss of blood and the exposure, but defiant still, as he saw a group of Confederate officers ride by, he raised himself and shouted as loud as he could: "Hurrah for the Union." The cry was heard by General Lee, who stopped his horse and

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Pickett's Gallant Charge at Gettysburg

dismounted to walk toward the prostrate man, now awaiting his approach with some fear. It was unnecessary, however, for the great general bent over him with a sad, kindly expression, and grasping his hand said: "My son, I hope you will soon be well."

The remainder of the year and winter went by unmarked by any large battles in Virginia. Both armies were preparing for the final act in the terrible drama of war, for after Gettysburg and the fall of Vicksburg in the West, many thoughtful Confederates were convinced that the ultimate success of their cause was hopeless against the overwhelming resources and equal courage of the North.

General Ulysses S. Grant, who assumed command of the Army of the Potomac in March, 1864, did not underestimate the difficulty of the task before him. He planned to "hammer continuously" at General Lee to wear him out, and in May began the march southward with an army about twice the size of

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the Confederate force in opposition. The bloody battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor cost the North a dreadful price in the lives of brave men, but the time had now come when the soldiers lost by the Army of Northern Virginia could not be replaced. The pressure of the powerful Union armies upon all sides of the Confederacy had absorbed the entire military strength of the South. In this campaign the genius of General Lee flamed at its brightest. He blocked and contested every move of his determined adversary, but was steadily forced to give ground by flanking operations which his inferiority in numbers could not prevent. Grant finally worked his way to the James, which he crossed, and sat down before the defenses of Petersburg, a few miles southeast of Richmond, into which Lee threw his army.

During the long fall and winter General Lee held this position against all attacks. His devoted army, as Grant had foreseen, was gradually wasting away from losses in action and from disease, and such had become the poverty of the



Sherman's "March to the Sea"

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South that the supply of necessary clothing and food for the men was more often insufficient than plenty. General Grant constantly reached out on his left with new works, which Lee with his old-time engineering skill promptly met with counter fortifications. This stretched the gray line of veterans thinner and thinner.

General Sherman's advance northward from Savannah, after his famous "March to the Sea," was the signal for Grant to strike. The movement took place along the whole front. It was resisted with brilliant courage, but General Lee realized that his forces were not strong enough to hold so long a line, and, after notifying Mr. Davis, withdrew toward the west during the night of April 1st. The Union troops entered Richmond the next day.

A week later, at Appomattox, Sheridan drew up his cavalry across the road taken by the retreating Confederates. Nothing else could be done, and with a sad heart, but conscious that he and his men had fought their best for a cause which they sincerely believed to be right, General Lee surrendered the hungry and worn-out remnant of the noble Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant. It is a matter of pride to all Americans to remember that the silent Northerner was considerate and thoughtful of the feelings of his brave foe, and gave such terms as permitted the gallant Southerners to enter fairly upon a newer but not less heroic endeavor to restore prosperity to their wasted country.



CLOSING DAYS

IT was not a sign of weakness that the eyes of General Lee should fill with tears as he parted from the men who for nearly three years had devotedly followed his leadership. His voice shook with emotion when he turned to the ragged, weather-beaten soldiers who crowded about eager to touch his hand: "Men, we have fought through the war together; I have done my best for you; my heart is too full to say more." Good old "Traveller," his favorite gray horse, carried the loved commander, bare-headed, through the lines of wet-eyed veterans to join his family in Richmond.

He was no longer the leader of a powerful army, only a war-worn soldier anxious for the peace and comfort of home life, but from everyone, including the men in blue who thronged the streets of the Capital, he received respectful greetings. How he must have enjoyed the company of his wife and children, undisturbed by any thoughts of the movements of armies!

During the later years of the war, Mrs. Lee had become a confirmed invalid. In spite of her inability to move about with ease, she set herself to the task of knitting socks and of providing such other necessities for the needy Confederate soldiers in the trenches of Petersburg as her limited means would allow. It was now that the tender care of the boy for his enfeebled mother was repeated in the solicitude of the famous general for his heroic wife.

The attitude of General Lee toward the new order of things was to resume citizenship under the only government existing in the country after the close of hostilities. He saw more clearly than did many others at the time that the terrible years of war had really destroyed the thoughts which had ruled the minds of the people of both North and South at the beginning of the struggle. Hundreds of hard-fought battlefields had proven that determination and stubborn courage were characteristic of all American soldiers. Distrust and contempt had faded away to be succeeded by the respect which brave men freely give to other brave men. General Lee's words were like a bugle call:

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General Lee and "Traveller"

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"I think it is the duty of every citizen, in the present condition of the country, to do all in his power to aid in the restoration of peace and harmony, and in no way to oppose the policy of the State or General Government directed to that object." Offered a home abroad by enthusiastic foreign admirers, he refused to even consider the possibility of giving up his birthrights as an American.

The grateful though impoverished people of the South could not forget that the war had made their great hero a poor man, and offers of assistance came from every part of the old Confederacy. General Lee, however, persistently declined to receive financial aid, but his kind heart would not permit him to hurt the feelings of the donor of a small token of affection or regard. He never failed to acknowledge the most trivial gift.

The many requests which reached him to serve as the head of this or that large business corporation were set aside. He chose to accept the presidency of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia, a small institution which owed its name and original fortune to George Washington. It had been nearly ruined by the war; its buildings were dismantled, its apparatus destroyed and its library scattered, but the men in charge of its affairs were undismayed and had reorganized for a fresh start. As illustrating the courage of the trustees, the story is told that their own personal financial condition at this time was such that only with the greatest exertion was a presentable suit of clothes obtained and the traveling expenses raised for the one of their number selected to notify the new president of his election.

General Lee entered upon this work with his usual earnestness and with a deep sense of the responsibility. Under his administration the college grew to be a power in the revival of higher education in the South. It was characteristic of General Lee that he should carefully acquire a thorough knowledge of his charges; learning the hopes and ambitions of each student, his associations and habits. In return they gave him their complete confidence and affection.

His life continued to run in these peaceful lines for several years. He would not be drawn into any fierce political strife, nor would he listen to the most tempting inducement to leave the work for which his mentality and simple dignity made him so singularly well-fitted.

The mind of General Lee was free from any bitterness against the North. Once when a minister took occasion to speak harshly of his late antagonists, the old Confederate leader said, "Doctor, there is a good old book which I read and you preach from which says, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse

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Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Va.

you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' Do you think your remarks this evening were quite in the spirit of that teaching?"

In the spring of 1870 the health of General Lee began to show the effect of the worry and exposure of the many trying campaigns he had been through. A trip to the milder climate of Savannah failed to improve his condition, nevertheless the fall session of Washington College opened with the grave, kindly president standing in his accustomed place. A few days later he was stricken while with his family at the evening meal. For two weeks he lingered. In the delirium of death his thoughts wandered to the battlefields, and his dying words, "Tell Hill he must come up," were remarkably similar to those of

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“Stonewall” Jackson who expired with “Tell A. P. Hill to prepare for action” upon his lips. On the morning of October 12, 1870, the noble soul of Robert E. Lee gently passed away.

Washington and Lee University now unites the names of its founder and restorer, the two glorious sons of Virginia, strangely alike in temperament and ability, if not in equal fortune. A splendid mausoleum is attached to the chapel of the college where reverent hands have placed a beautiful statue of flawless white marble representing the great soldier as tranquilly sleeping upon his couch. In the vault beneath rests forever the dead “Hero of the Confederacy.”

“The bitterness and resentments of
the war belong to the past. Its glories
are the common heritage of us all.
What was won in that great conflict
belongs just as securely to those who
lost as to those who triumphed”

— WILLIAM McKINLEY





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